

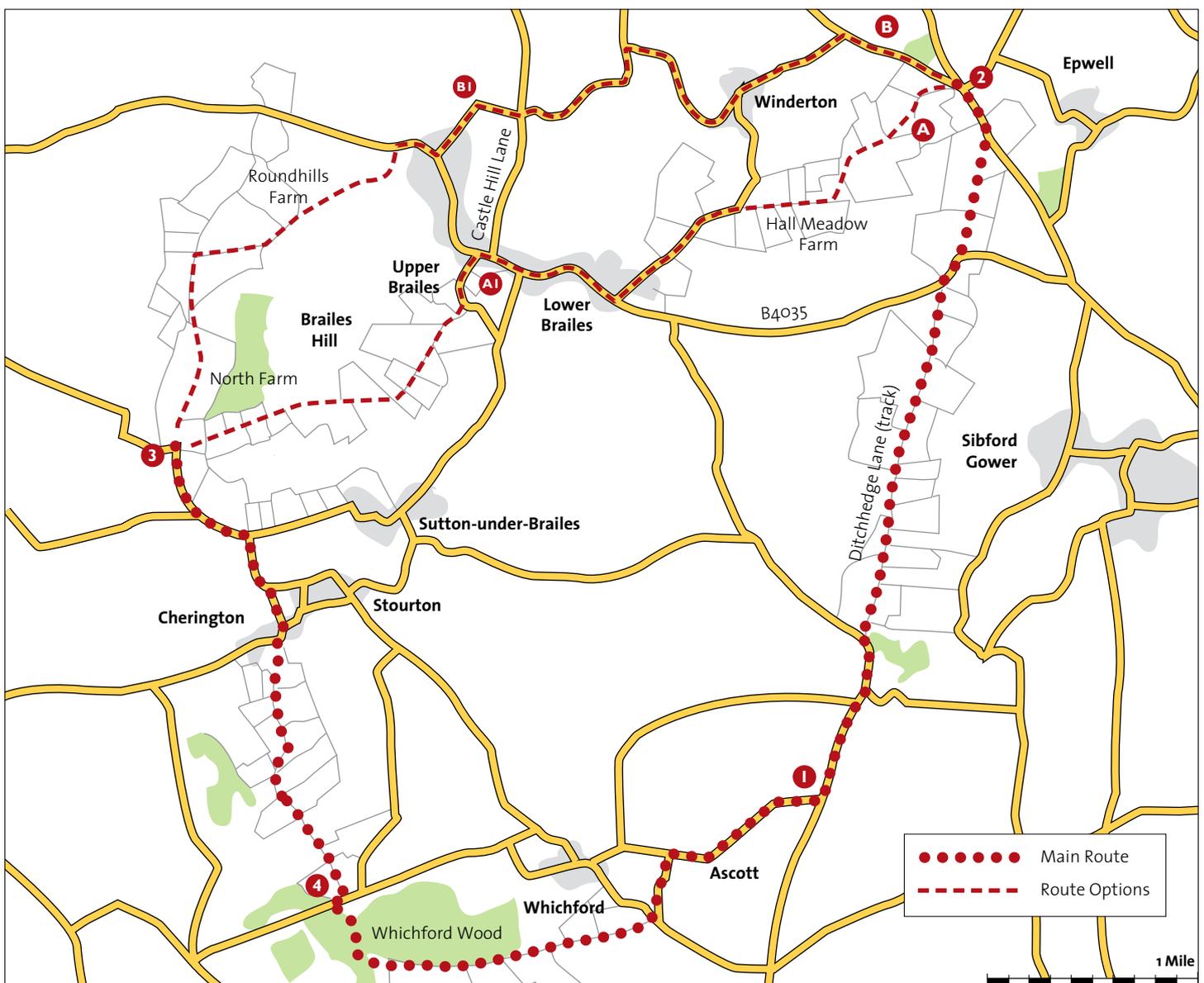
Off-road cycle ride 2

Brailes Hill and Ascott – 15 Miles



This is a ride of tracks and vistas. It takes you around the Vale of Feldon by riding over the Ironstone Hills and around Brailes Hill. The views are great and the tracks are good though largely soft and un-surfaced so it is best ridden in dry or frosty conditions, this is a muddy ride when wet.

You can start the ride at any point, please try to get to it on your bike if possible. If you do drive please park with consideration for the local community. Brackets indicate the wording of signs and the route is described in an anti-clockwise direction. Enjoy!



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The Route

1 Left at the T-Junction (Sutton-under Brailes 3). Straight on ignoring a road to your left and another to your right. Down a steep fast slope and through a ford (great fun!). Leave the road immediately past the ford by taking the bridleway through the metal gate. Follow the bridleway along a short sunken track for a climb along field edges. It improves when it levels out to become a good track. Follow it all the way to the road. Turn right at the road then left shortly after at the next bend to join a bridleway. Through the metal gate and along another stretch of track to the road. Turn left at the Road.

2 At the crossroads turn left (Winderton 1, Compton Wynyates 1 1/2, Brailes 4) where you have a choice. Option A is a little shorter but has a more adventurous off road section. Option B takes you along quiet lanes and then off road around the back of Brailes Hill.

A The valley bottom on this section can become waterlogged in wet conditions. You can stay on the roads and detour through Winderton if you wish to avoid a wet push after rain. Take the bridleway on your left through a wooden gate. Through the wood and bear left when it joins the track. At the end of the track, keep following the bridleway with the fence to your right, past the stile and through the old metal gate. Now take the bridleway diagonally across the field to the field corner in front of the derelict buildings (these may not be visible when the trees are in leaf). Through the metal gate and turn right (unsigned) when the hedge finishes (Do not carry on to the valley bottom). Past the derelict buildings to the field corner and follow the valley bottom down to the track keeping the stream to your left. When the stream switches to your right the track bears right then right again towards some farm buildings. Through the farmyard and follow the track to the road. Left at the road and right at the T-junction (Shipston 4 1/4 B4035). Through Lower Brailes.

A1 Take the second left. The turning just past a letterbox on your right (Henbrook Lane). Right onto the bridleway in front of the long white house. Up the sunken track which turns into a pleasant ride first between hedges and then through fields. Carry on at the farm buildings (hedge to your left) to follow the well way-marked bridleway through a series of fields with metal gates before dropping down to the lane.

B Take the first left after a good descent (Winderton 3/4 unsuitable for heavy vehicles) to continue the descent into Winderton. In Winderton straight on (Brailes 2 1/2 Shipston 5) ignoring the left (Brailes 1/2) unless you want to follow option A avoiding its off road section. Left at the T junction (Brailes 1 1/2 Shipston 4) and straight on at the crossroads

(Shipston 3 1/2). After going round caution corner you arrive in Upper Brailes. Turn right at the T junction.

B1 Round the corner and turn left to join a bridleway marked by a post with a yellow top just past a caution wild animals sign. Cross the footbridge and follow the bridleway up and along the woodland edge, you can see more posts with yellow tops. The bridleway improves when it is joined by a track. When the track splits bear left to stay on the bridleway. Continue to follow the bridleway as it leaves the track by turning right before a metal gate (Private, no public right of way). Round the field edge then diagonally across the field towards the farmstead. Left at the bottom then follow the bridleway with its yellow topped posts to the farm buildings where it becomes a lane.

3 This is where the options rejoin. From Option A turn left. From Option B go straight on. When you join the next road go straight on (Cherington 3/4, Stourton 1, Sutton-under-Brailes 1, Whichford 3). Ignore the next left and take the next right (Wolford 3, Long Compton 4). Right at the T junction (Wolford 3, Long Compton 4, leisure drive). Turn left opposite the letter box on your right. The lane soon turns into a bridleway/track. Follow it through the fields, at the metal horse gate ignore the bridleway right sign and follow the straight on sign. Cross the field ignoring the double gates to your left to carry on up to the metal horse gate at the fields' top. Through this gate and on to the houses where the track improves to become a tarmac drive. Turn right when it reaches the road.

4 Take the first left to follow a bridleway down a track (no unauthorised vehicles sign on a metal gate). Follow the bridleway through the wood and along its far edge. Leave the woodland edge to stay on the bridleway. Follow it along the field edge (hedgerow to your right) then onto a good farm track. Turn right at the road to join the proper road not the tarmac track through the wooden gate. Take the first left (Ascott 1/2) then turn right at the crossroads at the bottom.

Maps

This ride in its entirety can be found on both the Ordnance Surveys Landranger 151 'Stratford-upon-Avon & surrounding area' map and the Explorer Map 191 'Banbury, Bicester and Chipping Norton'.

Further information

The Cotswolds AONB website contains more information about cycling, including downloadable routes, maps and places to hire bikes. Visit www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/cycling

Words and photographs by Simon Smith